

# *The Open Door*

The Newsletter of the East  
Central Synod Wisconsin  
Women of the ELCA  
Synodical Women's  
Organization

December 2023



2024 -2025 Board Members

## *In this Issue...*

- Biennial Convention Elects New Board Members
- Biennial Convention Passes Resolutions
- Biennial Convention Approves Racial Justice Conference
- Conference Spring Events Announced
- Gaye Lindfors to Headline 2024 Fall Retreat September 14 at Imago Dei
- 2023 WELCA Triennial Convention and Gathering News
- 2026 WELCA Triennial in Des Moines - July 16-19

*... Save the Dates!*

## **Meet the New Board Members!**

At the ECSW Women of the ELCA Biennial Convention on October 21 at St. John - DePere, new board members were elected. Thank you to these women for being willing to serve along with those continuing on the board: Lois Hilger, secretary; Carol Grom, treasurer; and Sheri Bradshaw, Oshkosh Conference Representative. The board will start planning at a retreat at Pine Lake Camp February 2-3. Please pray for them all.

## Lynn Beck - President

Hello to All of You! I am very fortunate to be working with a wonderful group. WELCA has been a part of my life for many years. I accepted this new role to help all people and encourage them to have fun, as they get closer to God.

We have lived in Waushara County for most of my life and I have been with the same congregation, St. John's Lutheran, Saxeville, for 54 years. I am married and have two daughters and two granddaughters. I have worked with the same company for 24 years. Some of my duties have been: marketing, sales, customer account management, and coordination of product placement. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Cardinal Stritch College with relevant coursework in marketing, design, and merchandising. In my spare time, I design and create cards and event materials.

Some of my passions are...

1. Making all people feel welcome and seeing them have fun!
2. Working on coordinating new events: coming up with new ideas, planning, and the best part, decorating and displaying work.

I believe that life is too short, so have fun doing it, and if you can help people along the way, it is even better. I am looking forward to meeting all of you in the upcoming months. Please reach out to me if you have questions, a new idea, or would just like to talk.

I know with God's help and the help of all of you, "We can all make a difference."

God's blessings to you.

Lynn Beck [lynn.beckw5i@gmail.com](mailto:lynn.beckw5i@gmail.com)

## Kimberly Radtke - Appleton Conference Representative

Hello! My name is Kimberly Radtke and I attend Lord of the Lakes Lutheran Church in Winneconne. I love my church. It is a family to me. Serving on the ECSW Women of the ELCA board is something I wanted to do because there are so many special ladies in this group, and I am excited to help and be more involved in WELCA.

I was a teacher for 20 years but had to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. One of my jobs was delivering packages for USPS on Sundays. When a full-time position opened, I decided to take it. It is nice to only work one job so I can focus on other activities in my life, and I love working with the customers in a small town.

I enjoy participating in the bell choir at church and in addition to this board position, I am also on the Davis Child Care Center Board of Directors. I spent most of my career teaching 4K there and early childhood issues remain a priority to me. I spent some time filling in doing the children's message at church while we looked for a youth pastor. I

love that I can continue to have children in my life. Speaking of that, my niece and nephew are the best! Their names are Abigail and Lambeau. I am Abigail's godmother and many of my favorite church memories are with her: her baptism, first communion, Easter egg hunts, and enjoying music together. I look forward to putting in my best effort to make a difference in my role on the WELCA Board! Thank you!

Kimberly Radtke

### *Chelsea Bassett - Tomorrow River Conference Representative*

I am a member of Faith Lutheran Church in Rosholt, Wisconsin. I chose to serve on the board because Ruth Johnson, whom I only recently met at the Biennial Convention, nominated me. This made me laugh, but I make all my best decisions while laughing.

I work remotely from home for a small company called Cornershop Creative. My colleagues and I are based all around the country, and I manage our Site Builds team. We design and build websites for nonprofits. I've worked remotely since 2009 and all of my professional experience has been in work with nonprofit technology and communications.

I have degrees in music and sociology from Viterbo University, and my husband Joshua is a special education teacher at Rosholt Middle School. We raise two kids (Iva is 12 and Michael is 15) and as a family, we enjoy supporting and participating in a wide range of artistic activities, including singing, performing, and creating new art and stories.

We originally decided to join our church because we wanted a way to feel more connected to our immediate community, and it's worked! We're most passionate about participating in activities that help our neighbors feel loved and cared for.


Chelsea Bassett

Many thanks to the outgoing board members (Deb Martin, Phyllis Christie, Lola Doll, and Pam Scheulke) pictured here with those who will continue on the board (Lois Hilger, Sheri Bradshaw, and Carol Grom).

May God continue to bless you  
and your  
work!



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	<p><i>As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.</i></p>
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**Meet Gaye**



**ECSW Women’s Fall Retreat**

**September 14, 2024**

**Imago Dei Village**

Consider me a city girl with a Midwest small town heart. I’m not afraid to poke fun at my own mishaps, and I love laughing out loud ‘til it hurts! As a speaker, author, blogger, and Chief Encourager, I bring you a breath of fresh air on this journey we call life!

**Would you like a little inspiration from me every day?**

Follow me on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to see live videos and posts regularly!

# **Gaye Lindfors will Headline 2024 Synod Women’s Fall Retreat!**

We are excited to announce that Gaye Lindfors will be the featured speaker at the 2024 Synod Women’s Fall Retreat on Saturday, September 14 at Image Dei Village. Gaye is a much loved presenter whose deep faith and good humor have inspired hearers across the region.

Mark your calendars now and share the news with others!

# Conference Spring Event News

Please remember that you may attend any of the events that you wish. You do not need to be a member of a church in that conference (or a member of any church) to attend. Come and see!

## Appleton Conference Report

Appleton Conference is slated to hold their spring event with Oshkosh Conference on Saturday, April 20 at Christ Our Saviors - Oshkosh. See more information in the Oshkosh Conference Report below.

## Green Bay Conference Report

Emmanuel Seymour will host the 2024 Green Bay Conference Spring Event on Saturday, April 27. The theme will be “Doing God’s Work with Our Hands” and will feature all of Emmanuel’s activities including Lord’s House of Hope and the special project they are partnering on to build a state of the art playground accessible to all people.

The contact person is Marilyn Seidl Lorenz (920-504-4180 or [mseidllorenz@yahoo.com](mailto:mseidllorenz@yahoo.com) )

Other news from Green Bay Conference:

Ascension-Green Bay continues to have Joy Circle & supports WELCA financially.

The church makes quilts – in fact we dedicated 204 quilts in October! Half will go to Lutheran World Relief and half will be distributed locally by Head Start & Freedom House. We also have a strong knitting ministry, and those ladies make many prayer shawls and chemo caps throughout the year. Lastly, we have a small group of women who make plarn mats for the homeless. (Plarn mats are made by knitting plastic bags.)

We were involved in the bus trip to Milwaukee to worship with Greater Galilee Missionary Baptist Church & visit the Black Holocaust Museum.

Paula VanderGrinten reports that women of Good Shepherd-Howard are active in Wednesday afternoon Bible studies and book club at the Howard Library. They have also participated in Days for Girls International and Handbags for Hope

projects. The Fellowship Team organized and served various meals including Palm Sunday breakfast.

### Oshkosh Conference Report

After their successful joint conference in 2023, Oshkosh Conference will again partner with Appleton Conference for the 2024 Spring Event on Saturday, April 20 at Christ Our Savior - Oshkosh.

The contact person is Barbara Shew (920-410-0535 or [rshe2664@yahoo.com](mailto:rshe2664@yahoo.com) ).

### Shawano Conference Report

More information about the Shawano Conference Spring Event will be forthcoming. The location will be St. John's - Little Suamico.

### Tomorrow River Conference Report

Good Shepherd Plover will host the Tomorrow River Conference Spring Event on Saturday, April 20. Trinity Stevens Point will co host.

### Wisconsin River Valley Conference Report

The Wisconsin River Valley Conference Spring Event will be held at Pilgrim Lutheran in Wausau on Saturday, April 27. More information will be forthcoming.

The contact person is Shirley Ecker ( 715-355-1574 or [rsecker\\_5@msn.com](mailto:rsecker_5@msn.com) ).

## **Synod WELCA Biennial Convention Report**

The ECSW Women of the ELCA Biennial Convention was held on October 21 at St. John - DePere where the theme was "Justice is Love in Action." Keynote speaker Rev. Cindy Crane, Director of the Lutheran Office of Public Policy Wisconsin, talked about the biblical basis for advocacy. Shirley Paulson spoke about racial justice work in our synod, in particular to help people learn more about the history and ongoing effects of slavery and the history and ongoing effects of the treatment of Indigenous people in this country.

The convention adopted two resolutions: one to encourage people to use "Now is the Time: a Study of the Declaration of the the ELCA to People of African Descent," and a second to encourage people to make use of ELCA resources about Indigenous People and consider creating a land acknowledgment. The group also voted to designate \$2500 for a Racial Justice Conference in 2025. We will partner on this with the synod Racial Equity Team.

The in-kind gift project was a "Baby Shower for Jesus" with items to be given to the Stockbridge-Munsee Health and Wellness Center.

### ***Baby Shower for Jesus Thank You!***

Kori Price of the Stockbridge/Munsee Health and Wellness Center extends her most sincere thanks for all the items donated for our "Baby Shower for Jesus" at the Women of the ELCA Biennial Convention held on October 21, 2023.

There were some Thrivent Action Grants that helped to supplement the number of items collected, notably the diapers. Many thanks to Thrivent for their ongoing support of ministries that uplift and comfort people and communities in need. Please thank your representative, and remember to involve a future Thrivent Action Grant in your next ministry event.

An amazing number of infant hats were donated by an anonymous group or member and they were very much appreciated. And for all who donated items, a huge and very sincere THANK YOU. This was a wonderfully successful project, thanks to all.





Synod Women Attend WELCA Triennial Convention and Gathering in Phoenix







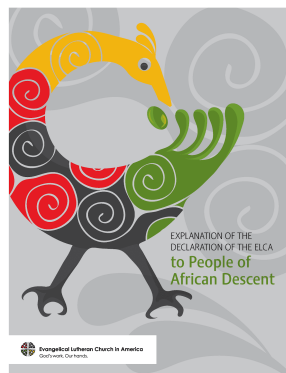
In September, 26 women from the ECSW attended the Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering in Phoenix. The theme was "Just Love" and attendees heard amazing speakers including Jacqueline Bussie (author of *Love without Limits*), Vance Blackfox (ELCA Director for Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations), and Dr. Kelly Sherman-Conroy (the first Native woman to earn a PhD in theology). In addition to being inspired by the worship services, music, and speakers, attendees enjoyed visiting

with and learning from other Women of the ELCA from around the country. They also took part in tours of the surrounding area and museums. One woman said she had never felt so close to God in her life as when she stood in the hills of Sedona. Another was moved by what she learned about Native American history at the Heard Museum.

Deb Martin and Shirley Paulson served as voting members to the Triennial Convention which preceded the Gathering. Voting members elected new national board members and passed several resolutions, two of which were submitted by our synod: one to encourage people to use "Now is the Time: a Study of the Declaration of the the ELCA to People of African Descent," and a second to encourage people to make use of ELCA resources about Indigenous People and consider creating a land acknowledgment. We, along with the Synod Racial Equity Team, will be offering sessions on how to create a land acknowledgement as well as the Now is the Time Study.

The next Triennial will be July 16-19, 2026 in DesMoines, Iowa. Because it is relatively close to us, we will probably charter a bus. Save the date and save your pennies! The Triennial is always a mountaintop experience! Go to [welcatg.org](http://welcatg.org) to register at the early bird price of \$315 through December 31.

## Now is the Time: A Five-Part Study of Racism Designed for People Like YOU!



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America introduced "[Now Is the Time: A Study Guide for ELCA Declaration to People of African Descent](#)" to help congregations wrestle with the meaning of the [Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent](#), and its

accompanying explanation.

"Now Is the Time" stresses realism, self-examination and accountability as the church acknowledges and apologizes for the history and impact of slavery and systemic racism. The study guide focuses on deepening our understanding of this history as participants engage in often-difficult conversation and reflection to move the church toward racial healing and justice.

The racial equity team of the ECSW has curated these resources to provide support for a leader like you. Watch the video below to learn how you can lead this study in your congregation and learn more at [www.ecsw.org/nowisthetime-leader](http://www.ecsw.org/nowisthetime-leader). UPDATE: In January and February, clergy will be participating in the Now is the Time study.

## Synod Racial Equity Team Needs New Members!

If you are passionate about working for racial justice, please consider joining the team. If three years is too long a commitment, shorter term projects also need members. Contact Shirley Paulson ([spaulson1949@gmail.com](mailto:spaulson1949@gmail.com)) We need you!

## WELCA Offers Special December Events

Topsy-Turvy Advent - December 3  
Register [here!](#)

## Join us for a Topsy-Turvy Advent event



Tired of the commercialized rush toward Christmas? Explore a Sunday afternoon of sabbath rest and inspiration around the *Gather* Advent devotional, “Topsy-turvy Advent.”

This fun, spirit-filled Advent devotional event will take place **Sunday, December 3 from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. CST**. You'll meet our Advent 2023 devotional writer and host, the Rev. Hannah Hawkinson, as she welcomes you to join us from wherever you are most comfortable

—favorite armchairs, church fellowship rooms or together with family and friends.

Pastor Hannah will help us understand the season of Advent and Mary's song of praise (see Luke 1:46b-55) to God for turning the world upside-down—or is it right-side-up? Participants will also have opportunities to discuss faith questions with others in online small groups.

Closed captioning and Spanish language translation (*Disponible en Español*) will be provided. You do not need to read the devotion ahead of time to participate.

Blue Christmas Service - December 21  
Register [here!](#)

### Blue Christmas service

Our Blue Christmas Service offers a safe place to bring your grief, fear, and loss. Brief readings. Quiet and reflective music. Prayers. All are welcome. Spanish translation provided. The service takes place at 7 p.m. CST on Thursday, December 21, 2023.



For more information, go to [www.welca.org/boldcafe](http://www.welca.org/boldcafe)

## BOOK REVIEW by Past President Deb Martin, All Saints - Oshkosh

### My Body is not a Prayer Request by Amy Kenny

Use people-first language such as “people with disabilities” not “disabled person.” Saying it was not my intention to hurt does not stop the impact of hurt. Telling someone they need to pray or believe more and they will be healed is not true and offensive. My ableism does not mean I am more valuable than a person with a disability.

Stop praying for healing because this can be patronizing as are the invasive interrogations. When we are called out for harm we caused, do not harm the person more by blaming them. Saying, “I am sorry you feel hurt,” is not an apology.

There are many examples in the Bible of Jesus interacting with people with disabilities. Consider the systemic barriers in our society built by nondisabled people. Work to change the barriers such as building accessibility, hiring discrimination, and low wages (p11).

At the end of each chapter are questions for the reader to reflect on. There is also a list of crazy things people have said to the author such as “sleep with a bar of soap and try jogging or relax.”

When organizations focus on equal instead of equitable, there is much needless pain inflicted. One example for her was in high school when the administration wouldn't allow her five extra minutes to get across campus between classes so she was usually late to class.

Our churches “worship at the altar of ableism.” We need to repent of our discrimination and follow Jesus (p 32). We should treat people with disabilities as humans not projects. Able-bodied people do not understand the testing, shots, drugs, poking, therapy, etc. she has gone through. So much pain and so little understanding in the medical community.

Stop conflating disability with evil in stories, movies, comics (p 72). Jacob becomes disabled (Genesis) when he wrestles with God. Consider what you watch on TV, movies, etc. “I know how you feel” is not true and harms her more. Commit to eliminating two or three ableist phrases from your vocabulary each week.

[http://web.augsburg.edu/english/writinglab/Avoiding\\_Ableist\\_Language.pdf](http://web.augsburg.edu/english/writinglab/Avoiding_Ableist_Language.pdf) Also, don't say, “You're such an inspiration” or “You don't even look disabled!” These are not compliments. Often her body just can't take more. She must rest for some hours or some days no matter what she had planned. She gives lots of additional resources to learn more (p127).

We need to “crip” (crippled – her abbreviation) our church spaces and practices. She uses this term as a way to reclaim a derogatory word that mocks her body for being different (p134). Include them in the planning of accessible and inviting spaces not as an afterthought. There are lots of assistive technology used by all of us such as iPhones and potato peelers.

I plan to reread this book and use the suggested resources to be a better ally and advocate for changes in our church.



## 20th Biennial Convention of the ECSW Women of the ELCA

St John, DePere

October 21, 2023

*“Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.” - Micah 6:8*

Call to Order: 8:27

**Attendance:** Board members in attendance: 7, voting members: 17, total number eligible to vote: 24. A quorum is a simple majority of those eligible to vote. There were 23 others attending making a grand total of 47 in attendance. Marlene Bergum was the Parliamentarian and Lola Doll served as registrar.

**Roll Call of Churches:** All Saints - Oshkosh; Ascension - Green Bay; Christ Community - Bellevue; Faith Lutheran - Rosholt; First English - Appleton; Good Shepherd - Howard; Good Shepherd - Plover; Grace - Ripon; Immanuel of Cicero - Black Creek; Lord of the Lakes - Winneconne; Our Redeemer's - Suring; Our Savior's - Denmark; Our Saviors - Iola; Peace - Green Bay; Peace - Kunesh; Prince of Peace - Appleton; St John - DePere; St John - Green Bay; St. John - Mosinee; St John - Saxeville; St Mark's - Neenah; Trinity - Appleton.

**Land Acknowledgement** - Led by Rev Cindy Wambeir-Meyer

**Purpose Statement:** As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

**Opening Prayer** by Oshkosh representative Sheri Bradshaw

**Welcome/Presentation from Churchwide Executive Board Treasurer: Raeann Purcell**

Raeann described the resources available to WELCA. The First Thursday of each month is Bold Cafe, dinner and discussion on ZOOM. Daily Grace is a daily devotional available, sent to your mailbox. These and many other resources are available on the website WELCA.

<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/>

**Deb Martin** described some wording changes in the constitution. We could use clusters instead of conferences, conveners or coordinators, secretary or communicator, virtual or in person. Our history has been president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. A new way could be to have members at large instead of conferences or co-chairs instead of president and vice president. Deb reviewed the results of the survey data that was conducted involving the churches in the ECSW and which had women's groups that meet and who use the Gather study. Her complete report was included in the program booklet.



Phyllis Christie presented the **candidates for election** to the Synodical Women's Organization. (SWO) Elected by unanimous ballot were: Lois Hilger as secretary; Carol Grom as treasurer; Sheri Bradford as Oshkosh Representative ; Kimberly Radke as Appleton Conference Representative; and Chelsea Basset as Tomorrow River Conference Representative and were voted in unanimously. Lynn Beck volunteered to serve on the board and was appointed. [Ed. Note: Lynn later agreed to serve as president. Shirley Paulson agreed to serve as board advisor as long as the new board needs her.]

Many thanks for the service on the SWO Board from Phyllis Christie, Lola Doll, Deb Martin, and Wanda Fischer.

Carol Grom presented the proposed budget. The end of September our balance is \$10,137.20

Motion made by Phyllis Christie and seconded by Marilyn Feltz that a line item called mission support be added to the budget for \$4500. Motion did not pass 10-12.

\$3,500 will be kept for operating expenses in the budget.

Vote to adopt the budget passed unanimously. Motion to destroy the ballots from today's voting: made by Pat Westfall and seconded by Cathy Sell. Passed.

**Offering from today:** \$1,260.00 divided 40% to Lutheran Disaster Response and 60% to WELCA churchwide.

**Four Resolutions** were presented by Shirley Paulson. All passed unanimously.

1. **Therefore be it resolved**, that all women and congregational units be encouraged to study the problem of racism using resources such as Now is the Time Study, and if possible offer online or other sessions of the study.
2. **Therefore be it resolved**, that women be encouraged to use the ELCA's Truth and Healing resources and encourage all congregations, who do not already have one, to create their own land acknowledgement.
3. **Therefore be it resolved** that the ECSW Women of the ELCA SWO designate \$2500 to be used during the 2024-2025 biennium to support a Racial Justice Conference or similar event.
4. **Therefore be it resolved** that \$1,000 be donated to the East Central Synod Crossways Ministries.

St Mark's in Neenah will host the next Biennial Convention in 2025.

Motion to adjoin by Lola Doll, seconded by Phyllis Christie 10:25 am.

**Save the Dates:**

September 14, 2024 **Fall Retreat at Imago Dei Village**

July 16-19, 2026 **Triennial Gathering Des Moines, Iowa**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Lois Hilger 10-31-2023

## Synod and Churchwide WELCA Resolutions Adopted in 2023

1. Encourage people to learn about racial justice by using “Now is the Time: A Study of the Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent”
2. Encourage people to learn about racial justice by using ELCA resources about Indigenous People and consider creating a land acknowledgement
3. (Synod) Designate \$2500 to be used to present a Racial Justice Conference during 2024-2025
4. (Synod) Donate \$1000 to Crossways Camping Ministries

**\*\*\*\*\* In an effort to be better stewards, we have stopped sending paper copies to any person or church that did not pay for renewal. If you know anyone who wants to receive a paper copy, please share the information below with her. \*\*\*\*\***

**Please Note: Paper Subscriptions to the Open Door expire each December.**

**If you would like to renew yours, send a check for \$6 made out to**

**Women of the ELCA – ECSW**

**with your name, address, church name, and phone number to**

**Carol Grom, 2124 Mahogany Court, DePere, WI 54115.**

**If you know someone who would like to receive the e version of the Open Door, please email Shirley Paulson with first and last name, phone number, church name, and email address.**

**[spaulson1949@gmail.com](mailto:spaulson1949@gmail.com)**

## **Coming Events - Save the Dates and Plan to Attend!**

April 20, 2024 - Tomorrow River Conference Spring Event - Good Shepherd Plover and Trinity Stevens Point, co hosts

April 20, 2024 - Joint Oshkosh and Appleton Conferences Spring Event - Christ Our Savior Oshkosh

April 27, 2024 - Green Bay Conference Spring Event - Emmanuel Seymour

April 27, 2024 - Wisconsin River Valley Conference Spring Event - Pilgrim Wausau

Spring 2024 - Shawano Conference Spring Event - St. John's Little Suamico

September 14, 2024 - Fall Retreat - Imago Dei Village featuring Gaye Lindfors

April 2025 - Racial Justice Conference presented by ECSW Women of the ELCA and Synod Racial Equity Team

LEADERSHIP  
 NOVEMBER 2023 - NOVEMBER 2025  
 WOMEN OF THE ELCA SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION (SWO)  
 EAST CENTRAL SYNOD WISCONSIN

PRESIDENT Lynn Beck St. Johns - Saxeville 715-572-5875 <a href="mailto:lynn.beckw5i@gmail.com">lynn.beckw5i@gmail.com</a>	VICE PRESIDENT  Open	SECRETARY Lois Hilger Grace - Appleton 920-850-0111 <a href="mailto:loishilger419@gmail.com">loishilger419@gmail.com</a>	TREASURER Carol Grom St. John - DePere 920-370-8818 <a href="mailto:carolgrom@aol.com">carolgrom@aol.com</a>
APPLETON CONF REP Kimbery Radtke Lord of the Lakes - Winneconne 920-205-7783 <a href="mailto:ninjababywhisperer@gmail.com">ninjababywhisperer@gmail.com</a>	GREEN BAY CONF REP  Open	OSHKOSH CONF REP Sheri Bradshaw Grace- Ripon 920-896-2126 <a href="mailto:bradshawsheri@gmail.com">bradshawsheri@gmail.com</a>	
SHAWANO CONF REP  Open	TOMORROW RIVER CONF REP Chelsea Bassett Faith - Rosholt 715-344-3988 <a href="mailto:chelsea.bassett@gmail.com">chelsea.bassett@gmail.com</a>	WISCONSIN RIVER VALLEY CONF REP  Open	
Appleton Conference Coordinator	Green Bay Conference Coordinator  Open	Oshkosh Conference Coordinator	
Shawano Conference Coordinator  Open	Tomorrow River Conference Coordinator  Open	Wisconsin River Valley Conference Coordinator  Open	
Historian  Open	Computer Records/ Mailing List  Open	Open Door Editor  Shirley Paulson <a href="mailto:spaulson1949@gmail.com">spaulson1949@gmail.com</a>	